

Linda Clair
Five-day Meditation Retreat
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Transcription from Audio Recordings

File 3c – Monday afternoon discussion session

Linda: How are you T.? You okay? You look a bit fragile.

Question: I don't know, just sitting now, this sit, it's just so whatever. I just keep going back to the counting because I don't want to be taken away in any idea of magnificence or awesomeness. I just keep going back to, "one, two." I just want to keep not getting engaged by anything. It's like it's been such a busy mind this retreat and suddenly there's this – I don't know what, I just feel so blessed. I don't know how I'm sitting in this place because I didn't intend to sit here. But it's knocked my socks off just to be sitting in front of you like this.

Linda: Have you been counting the whole retreat?

Question: No, a lot, a lot. And it was really helpful when you said that to N. about how it's really exhausting because I'd just go and sleep between sits. And I count at night when I can't sleep. I'm just constantly counting, just to break it.

Linda: Good.

Question: But one query is that, especially when I've been sitting, it's like, "This is so noisy, this inside here." And yet often, and more and more these days, being in nature suddenly everything has gone, spaciouly. Everything is vast and there doesn't appear to be anybody here, until that person says, "Wow, there's nobody here," and then there is somebody here. That seems to happen spontaneously in nature but sitting it's, "Burrrrr." This is the first sit where it was, "Wow." It's so powerful to be just in front of you. That's what I was guessing.

Linda: That's why you come to something like this. Whatever stage you're at, whatever state you're in, it tests you. Because when you're in nature or your sort of comfort zone – whatever that is, whether it's nature or in the city or at home – it's different, it's a bit more comfortable. You come here and it really shows you and tests what's happening in you. And you see there's a bit more.

Question: There's a lot more.

Linda: Not as much as you think. And the clearer you become the more you see. So that can become a bit daunting because you go, "Ah, feels like there's even more, there's more and more." But it's just that you're clearer to see that. So it's great having those times in nature where you just resonate with nature and you have a bit of a break. But this will really – specially at certain times, certain stages, the deeper stuff needs to be weeded out, and come out – and that's what this does. I was going to say forced out, but in a way, yes. Even though I say don't use force it does need a bit extra to squeeze it out, to get it out.

Question: Yeah, I feel like I'm having to be so vigilant, just with the counting and this retreat. It feels almost like a force. It's like I'm *not* going to engage, I'm going to come back, I'm going to come back.

Linda: You need to be incredibly determined and ruthless about the thoughts. Doesn't matter what the thought is. "I've got to think about..." – you don't! While you're here there is nothing you need to think about. You can pretend there is something to think about when you're in your daily life and go, "I have to think about this for work," and that, and you can try and justify it and it's easier to do that. But right now and right here there is *nothing* you need to be thinking about. You don't need to know you're here – it's obvious you're here. You don't need to think about what's for dinner, you don't need to think about anything. You really don't need to. Doesn't mean you won't, but if you know you don't need to then that can give you that determination to go, "No, no, no, I'm not going to be taken in."

Question: Yeah, it's amazing because if I'm not following the verbal thoughts then it's like dream world is being thrown at me of just images, constant.

Linda: Yep. The images can be harder because they're faster and before you know it you're involved watching them and getting involved with them.

Question: The memories, it's mostly memories of places I've been. They come up as just a picture.

Linda: And there's no point!

Question: There's no point, no. There's no point in any of it.

Linda: Well, the point is it's the mind trying to engage you and get you away from here, from now. Because in now it doesn't exist. It's got no power at all in that now. So just keep going, keep being as disciplined and strict as possible. And you won't feel the effects so much during the retreat – it will be afterwards that you feel it.

Question: And that's the other thing, I notice even after a sit I go outside and it's like, "Woo, woo." In the sit it's just – anyway it's what it is, I don't know. Yesterday it was just so horrendous. It was like, "What the fuck am I doing here? How long have I been doing this shit? And it's still this bullshit." Like it was really such – and I was aware too that this was like massive resistance coming up.

Linda: And massive resistance coming up means that something is worried. If you can call the mind an entity it's incredibly worried, it's getting desperate to stop you doing this. And that's what it will often use: "You've been doing this for so long. You haven't got anywhere. Look, I'm still the boss. Blah, blah, blah." And it's ridiculous of course. But particularly in the later stages you do have to make an even greater effort – you do. It doesn't just happen, it doesn't just fall into your lap. You actually have to become even more single pointed and go, "This is the most important thing," and be willing to do anything to be free from it. And then one day that will happen.

I know when it happened for me it was the same thing. Something triggered me, I was just suddenly emotional, and it was like, "I've done all this stuff, all this sitting, all this practice, and I can still react to something quite ridiculous." And that was at a very, very mature stage. So try not to let it get you down. It will get you and you've got to get up and keep going. You've got to keep going whatever.

It's all a bluff. It doesn't feel like that but it is. It's not real. This is real now, this is reality.

Question: Your question, "Where am I?" is just so helpful to me. Where my body is right now.

Linda: Yeah, where are you? I've got *no idea* who I am. And I've never felt so free. You don't find out who you are. Everyone is obsessed by that; it's not what you're looking for.

Question: And I know there must be fear that stops me being utterly here, now, present. I'm not finding it. It used to be like terror that was looming above me all the time. That's not there and it feels a real ease. But I noticed in this last sit there is a resistance to the incredible exquisiteness of nothing. There's a resistance to that. It's almost unbearable.

Linda: Well, the thing is the resistance needs to be there. It's really necessary. You can go, "If it wasn't there I'd be here and it would be so amazing." But it needs to happen gradually. You get a sense of it, but what the resistance is doing is it's your safety valve. It's like an electrical current and the current is becoming stronger and stronger and what the resistance is doing is protecting you. It's protecting your body, your psyche, protecting everything. And even though you can say part of it is the mind, it is completely necessary because you just can't take that huge surge that comes in until you're ready for it. So you've got to be patient. You've got to be single pointed and desperate in a way, but patient as well. Because if that surge comes through before you're really prepared enough it can unbalance you and damage you. So the resistance is really your friend even though you see it as an obstacle. You can see it like that – it's not, it's completely necessary. It's all about timing – when the time is right. But you have to be desperate for the time to be right.

And then when it happens, as it happened with me, it was a shock but not a *sudden* shock, it was this gradual shock. It was such a shock I didn't even know what was happening, but it wasn't this, "Oh, my body's shaking," and the lights go on, and all that stuff. It was so shocking – it just gently, everything just clicked into place, and that was it. Time stopped, everything stopped, the questions stopped – and that's how it happens.

And that's what happens with this practice. It needs to be gradual and that will make your enlightenment much more balanced, much more full, and much less of a sudden shock because the shocks are happening gradually. So I know everyone wants it to happen right now, I did, and it will happen right now – that's a fact – but only when that momentum stops. That momentum like you're going back in time, where you reach that point where you stop. And then you suddenly realise, "Ah, everything's stopped." So just keep working as hard as you can.

Question: On that topic I just wanted you to go over what you said earlier about why going through the process was better than just waking up enlightened – something to do with understanding.

Linda: Realizing how you got here – it's so important because the reason you become enlightened is really to help others realise that. It's not for yourself. You think it's for yourself – I thought it was for myself, really, I just wanted to be free from my own suffering. And you need to become self-obsessed in a way – it can help. I didn't have any of that metta stuff where I was compassionate towards others. I was just obsessed with being free from my own suffering. But then you realise it's obviously not for yourself.

And if you can understand, if it's some sort of practice or logical process that you've gone through, you can pass that on to others. It doesn't mean everyone around you is going to become enlightened, and I'm not saying people who don't have a practice don't affect people – it does. But often they become obsessed with *just* being around that person, rather than being able to go away and do their own practice and become more independent and stronger.

So going through this, it's a definite process, and seeing how your mind functions, what's causing your suffering, going through every little bit of this is really part of your enlightenment. You're gradually becoming enlightened. And then you're in a much better position to help others because you've *realised* your own enlightenment, you haven't just become enlightened, you've realised the how and the why. Rather than just saying, "I'm enlightened, I'm here to help you, come and follow me." I don't want anyone to follow me. I'm not interested in that. So then your life becomes – you're a servant for everyone else. It's not to become this powerful teacher who's got a whole lot of people around who do stuff for you. (Laughs.) Not that I've got that.

But if you understand, you know.

Question: Yes, I haven't heard it before. It made sense when you said it – there's a value in knowing the process.

Linda: There is, and it's part of the process. Whereas some people have probably been – I used to call them microwaved – in a way, where there is a degree of realisation there and energy, but deep down something hasn't been fully cooked because they haven't really understood the whole process. And often they come a bit unstuck as they go on because there has been this essential lack of a foundation in the whole process.

And that's what this is all about – building that foundation. It might seem tedious at times but you'll be glad about it later on. So there's a double thing going on where you are working and I am working. And energetically I'm giving you a turbo boost, but then you're giving yourself a boost too and putting yourself in that position. And that makes it much, much stronger than me just sitting here talking to you or giving you a lecture and you just soaking up the energy. It's a very different thing when there are two people connecting.

Question: I've been feeling this retreat, well the last few have been really quite intense, but this one seems to be very intense again, as other people have been feeling. And my mind just hopelessly gets sucked into – and I'm alright with that, I can't do anything about it. And at times I do the counting and try and come back. But other times it's almost like I have to get to that point of pain or discomfort or that energy, and then it starts uploading and it's just so intense. That last sit I willingly went looking for thinking and went there, and I know it was out of fear that I was going to break, or scream, or cry. Just couldn't take it anymore, but it's still going on in the background. And then I'd come back and I'd dip my toe in and, "Eahh," – back to thinking. So I guess something is still going on even though I'm willingly going away.

Linda: Yep. Just being here, I could say, just being here sitting is enough in a way. And often too much is made of what happens during a sitting. Like I was saying before about having a really still sitting and you think, "Oh, great. I'm almost here – this is it." And then you have one where there is a lot of thinking going on and you can tend to go, "Oh, that was a terrible sit, it's not working." In a way – and I don't like to say this because I don't want you to just sit there and let it go crazy all the

time, but sometimes it's fine, particularly when everything is so intense – but in a way being here, making the effort to come here and sitting here is enough. Sitting here in silence for a few days, it's a radical thing to do, and not many people are prepared to do it. And it's a really scary thing to do.

Question: The resistance has got a bit less coming in of late. I think I stopped questioning it too. I just come now; I don't worry about why I'm doing it or what the result is going to be so much.

Linda: Well, if you look rationally at why you're doing it it probably doesn't make sense but there's something that brings you here and you just surrender to that. You go, "Okay, I'll give up. I'll just come." So when your mind is going crazy like that don't worry about it. It's fine; it will do that.

Question: It was just good to see and acknowledge that I am scared. I don't know how people sit for two hours. It terrifies me.

Question: I wanted to check in with you about a couple of things. So my single-pointed, super-vigilant watcher is back, and it's probably being here. Once again I'm only counting the breath when there's no thought so I'm watching, another thought, – here it comes, "three," breath. And it's becoming more exquisite to find, watching that breath, and I'm super energised. It's like all of me is right here and it's full on. I didn't get to sleep last night. That's why I slept in this morning. It feels like an important thing to be doing. But I don't know where it's going. It's something that I call upon in my everyday life and in my everyday meditations. But here it's rampant, strong, like I don't want to waste my time here, especially after missing the last one. Even more so I'm so determined and I'm here.

Linda: Well, you didn't miss the last one.

Question: Well, it felt like it.

Linda: You were still here. And that's a huge thing to even get here. (*Questioner has the extra constraints of her physical disability.*) But you seem much stronger and stable this time. And you're a remarkable woman. The breath does become at times exquisite. I used to feel that too, where it's like all there is – just the breath. So just keep doing what you're doing. Sometimes the mind will go crazy, sometimes not. Just try and accept that without letting it go too crazy. You know, you'll get to a point where you get sick of it and just come back. But sometimes you almost need a bit of a break from the energy because it does take so much energy just to sit here and be. So just keep doing what you're doing. And if you're not sleeping and then you need to sleep in that's fine too. I noticed you weren't here this morning. Because you do seem very strong this time – so last time was *not* a waste of time. It was really uncomfortable for you, but yeah. I'm glad you're okay this time.

Question: It's in a way made me more determined to make the most of this opportunity.

Linda: Great, and that's what you need. When you get knocked down like that, you have to get up. You either give up, or you get up and go, "Okay, I'm going to keep doing this." And I can feel that determination in you, like, "I'm going to do this whatever, and keep my health together, keep my body together, just to do this." And that's the reason you keep your body together – to do this, everyone. Like I said, it is hard on the body, but it also energises the body too. Because you become much more aware of your body you tend to look after it just naturally more anyway.

Question: That was the other thing I wanted to check in with you about. My body pulls my attention a lot, every day. I've been playing with, "How can I make more use of that?" Like it brings my attention but not all of my attention. I can be thinking while I have to shift or move or chew and swallow, or whatever. But I feel like because I am in my body so much, so aware of it, is there not more I can do to get more from that?

Linda: Well, I think you're getting enough from that. And seeing you walking is really interesting too because you're very much – usually when I'm walking down here I can see you walking outside, and I really love watching you because you're totally in your body. And there's this determination about it too, there's this real strength about it. I'd say you're doing enough. Don't try and do any more. I mean you have to, and that gives you an advantage in a way, because you do have to be very careful about what you do, very much aware of your body. So just keep doing that but don't be too strict with yourself, don't be too extreme about it. And give yourself times where you can just relax. Otherwise it will be too much of a strain. So definitely have times when you relax, but when you can just keep being as aware of your body as you can. Good.

How are you going A.?

Question: Going okay I guess. It's been a bit of a crazy day with a few quieter moments but lots of periods of intense thinking as well going on. I've been working a lot with that idea that it's all just thinking, as in it doesn't really matter what it's about, and the content is not important. Because it's so tempting to think certain topics or contents are far more important or relevant to be thinking about than others and some thoughts are important. And it's been to really just see that a bit more deeply – that it's all just thinking.

Linda: It is! It's all just thinking.

Question: I've been trying to work with what you said yesterday around not trying to look for anything in particular but just trying to be completely open. Because I was saying yesterday about how I was feeling this current of awareness, and if I looked for it I could find it there but I would have to look for it to feel it, it wasn't spontaneously there. But yesterday I was feeling the breath in my belly and trying to be as open as I could, and all of a sudden I was focusing on the sensations in my body, but it felt like there was all this space around the sensations of my body. It was almost like I'd been walking through the forest just looking at my feet the whole time and all of a sudden I looked up and saw this huge world around me that I'd been ignoring for the whole time I'd been practicing.

Linda: Your whole life.

Question: Or my whole life. So it was sort of weird, just being able to feel this empty spaciousness around the sensations in my body, and even while the thoughts were coming as well. But it was like it was held in this much bigger vista that I could start to be open to. So it was interesting.

Linda: Yeah, that's great, because if you're looking *for* something you miss the space. And we're always looking for something, something tangible, something solid, something we can see. We totally wipe out everything around and miss so much.

Question: Since then the sitting has been like – there'll be the breath and the sensations and all the thoughts going on –but it feels like a big box sitting up around here or sometimes it's not in my head it's further down in my chest, this big space that it's all playing into. And at one point it felt like it wasn't located anywhere anymore.

Linda: So make sure you stay grounded in your body, and just be open.

Question: Normally that happens when I'm feeling the breath and just trying to open without looking for anything – trying to be open to everything but feeling the breath at the same time.

Linda: The mind is so, so limited. I just remember this feeling once, it was like I was looking down at this tiny spec that was the mind, and I was in this vastness. And realizing I was contained in this little spec before – that was my whole world – and it was just so, so limited. And here I was, and that was nothing, and yet I thought it was everything. It was so good to see that. And there were no regrets – it wasn't like, "I wish I'd realised this sooner," or anything like that, because it was now. And it had always been now; I just hadn't realised that. So yeah, thinking – highly overrated.

Question: And it's also impossible to stop.

Linda: No, it's not impossible to stop.

Question: It feels that way, at least at this point.

Linda: It feels impossible. You've just got to become more and more determined. And particularly when there is one thing that's really coming back again. That's something that you can really use. Sometimes that's better than having a whole lot different thoughts, having that one thing coming back again and again and again, because it gives you more of a single-pointedness, not a focus, but something that you can keep working at, that one thing. Rather than being scattered, it's that. So yeah, use it.

Question: It's been good to have something to really work with deeply.

Linda: It doesn't matter anyway, whatever it is.

Question: It's all just thoughts really. 😊

Linda: It is.

Question: Our whole life is just a thought really, for most of us.

Linda: Just a blip. A body is a thought – but don't think about that. (Laughter.)